

Voice of the People

Manuscript
EU and the parliament
BRT, Germany

Crew:

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Presenter: Europe is growing together. Many people are looking forward to it, but especially young people are worried because they do not really know what that entails for them. How does the European Parliament function and how will the enlarged EU be able to translate young people's interests? We have asked young Germans about it.

Duration: 3'55

Translation

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Presenter:

Insert: 00:02:02 – 00:02:12 (Martin Hähnlein)

Europe is growing together. Many people are looking forward to it, but especially young people are worried because they do not really know what that entails for them. How does the European Parliament function and how will the enlarged EU be able to translate young people's interests? We have asked young Germans about it.

Question:

I would like to know why the new EU convention still has not yet come into effect. I thought it would promote the democratisation of Europe?

Dr. Ingo Friedrich (00:02:33 - 00:02:56):

Insert: 00:02:35 – 00:02:45 (Ingo Friedrich, CSU, Vice President of the European Parliament)

The heads of state and government still have not agreed on every part of the convention. I trust that they will come to an agreement in June. Then it takes some time to ratify the new convention by all of the national parliaments – or even by the people who vote for it – and then the new EU convention can finally come into effect.

Question:

How can the European Parliament get more influence? I think it is not as powerful and the European Commission and the European Council at the moment.

Dr. Ingo Friedrich (00:03:03 - 00:03:37)

Insert: 00:03:05 – 00:03:15 (Ingo Friedrich, CSU, Vice President of the European Parliament)

The European Parliament would have more influence physically and psychological if this year's turnout will be higher than it was five years ago. Otherwise Parliament's influence and possibility to control decisions could only be increased when changing treaties. This already happened four times – Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice and now through the new EU convention. More control is always a good idea. The Commission and the Council should be controlled more by Parliament than it is now the case.

Question:

How will the EU enlargement to the East be financed, for the new member states are not the richest countries?

Dr. Ingo Friedrich (00:03:47 – 00:04:20)

Insert: 00:03:49 – 00:03:59 (Ingo Friedrich, CSU, Vice President of the European Parliament)

The financing of the new member states is only step-by-step possible starting with a low level. Only one eightieth of the funds that West Germany pays to East Germany will be provided for all of the ten new member countries. Which means that it will take much longer until their standards of living will be the same as in Germany or the rest of the 15 current member countries.

Question:

How can voters influence the European elections?

Dr. Ingo Friedrich (00:04:27 – 00:05:08)

Insert: 00:04:29 – 00:04:39 (Ingo Friedrich, CSU, Vice President of the European Parliament)

This year the European elections are very important. The result will determine whether the new president of the European Commission will be a Christian Democrat or a Social Democrat. And this year's election will determine a direction, because the majority of the European Parliament has a big influence on virtually all of the 84 important fields in which decisions are taken by the European Union at the moment. From environmental policies over trade to any questions about the European market. This election is more important than all European elections so far.

Question:

I would like to know what concrete influence the members of the European Parliament have?

Dr. Ingo Friedrich (00:05:15 – 00:05:55)

Insert: 00:05:17 – 00:05:27 (Ingo Friedrich, CSU, Vice President of the European Parliament)

It depends on how active the member is and it is decisive whether he can convince his colleagues from his ideas. He has to make certain steps: first he has to convince all the German members and then the rest of the parliamentary party. If he can convince his parliamentary party that his idea is good – and if it is the biggest in the European Parliament – he will have a lot of influence. The members of Parliament really can influence decisions to a certain extent.